

The SACRAMENTAL *Worthiness*
OR, THE *693.e.6*
Church of ENGLAND'S DOCTRINE³

RELATING TO

That WORTHINESS,

Which She holds *Necessary* to an *Effectual* Partaking of the Lord's Supper explained:

In a SERMON on *Sunday December 24, 1736*.

By ABR. OAKES, LL. D.

Rector of *Wethersfield* in *Suffolk*.

Τὰ ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις.

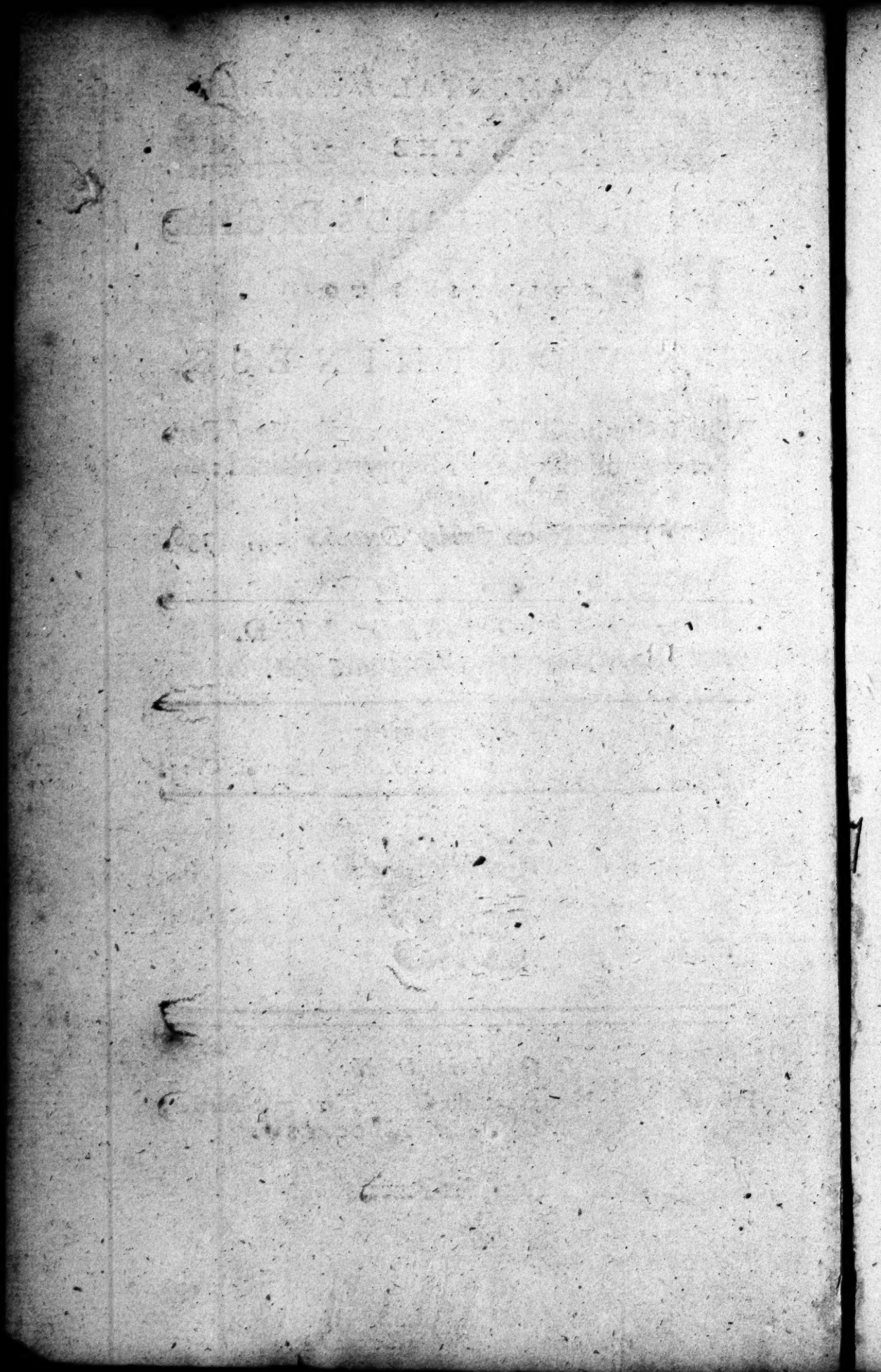
C. APOST. Lib. viii. C. 15.



L O N D O N:

Printed for J. NOON, at the *White Hart* near *Mercers*
Chapel, in *Cheapside*. MDCCLXXXIX.

Price Six-Pence.



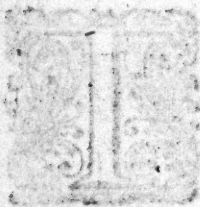


P R E F A C E.

THE Attention of the Public has, for some Years past, been held employed on a Controversy concerning the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper : I profess myself not bias'd in the following Discourse, either by this or that Opinion, but by Truth only; which Truth I deduce from the Doctrine of the Church of England, and shew That Doctrine (which I reckon is universally consistent) to be conformable to Reason and Scripture.

I COR.

RECEIVED





I COR. xi. 27.

Wherefore, whosoever shall eat This Bread, and drink This Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be Guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

THE Elements of the Holy Communion are here called *The Bread and Cup of the Lord*, because This Sacrament of the Supper has the Sanction of his Own Authority, or (according to the Apostle's Argument) was expressly appointed by Him. And a Person partaking of them *unworthily*, is said to be *Guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*, because he partakes of these Elements in an improper manner; not considering them as the Figures of his Body and Blood, or putting a Sense upon them unwarranted by Scripture. Not, that he becomes Guilty of the Death and Sufferings of our Lord, (as I have known some Weak Christians

B

stians, out of an ill-grounded Fear, unhappily to understand it) but only of a careless Misapprehension, or of an unholy Misapplication of this sacred Rite.

OUR *Apostle* tells us, that he had received of the Lord, *That He, the Lord Jesus, the Night he was betrayed*, instituted this Holy Sacrament *in Remembrance of Himself*; and therefore he concludes, *As often as You eat This Bread and drink This Cup, You do shew, or declare, the Lord's Death*, that is, Your Faith in his Death, by this Act of Remembrance. And then follows the Text: *Wherefore, whosoever shall eat This Bread, and drink This Cup of the Lord unworthily*, that is, without such a Faith, truly commemorative of his Death and Passion, and merely commemorative of it, *shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of our Lord*; or (as I said) of a Sinful Mistaking, or Misapplying, of the End of its Institution, which is, *Do this in Remembrance of me*.

NOTHING therefore is, or can be, more plain, easy and intelligible, than That *Worthiness*, which Men ought to be prepared with, for duly partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is really nothing (if I may so far anticipate the Demonstration I intend to make of this Truth) but a truly *Commemorative Faith*, accompanied (as every Act of Religion, if sincerely religious, cannot but be) with *proper Dispositions*.

Dispositions. But I know not how, this plain Thing has been render'd extremely difficult, and almost unintelligible, by the Different Opinions of Men about it.

SOME have made it to consist necessarily, in a *long Course* of previous Meditations and Prayers, which few People have Time to go through with, or not so devoutly as they could wish, by reason of the necessary and perpetual Hurry of their daily Callings; by which means they are greatly disheartened from so much as attempting That Duty, which they think they have not Time to perform in an acceptable manner.

OTHERS have judged nothing less to be sufficient, than a *settled Habit* of all Virtue, and that if a Man be not first thoroughly reformed from the Practice of every Vice, he is not fit to approach the Holy Table; as persuading themselves, the Pardon of All Sin is, and must be, *sealed* There: And hence, the greatest part of Men among us have been terrified into an utter Desuetude of this Duty, and indeed from all Thought of ever partaking; as knowing themselves Imperfect, and in many Things Sinful, and consequently Unworthy to *present their Souls and Bodies a living Sacrifice* before God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold, that is, than to approve or ac-

cept of, any Thing so polluted and unholy as They.

AND indeed there is, in the *Exhortations* of our Church-Service, some Expressions so very dreadful and forbidding, that it has been the Judgment of some Learned and Good men, that it would not be amiss to exclude them : And certainly it would not ; if the Fathers in *Convocation* should think it fit to decree it proper, so to do. But till that be done, We, whose Office is purely Ministerial, must be content to make Use of them : And all we can prudently do in the Case is, To guard our People from any bad Impressions they might chance to make on their Minds ; for want of understanding them in that sober Sense, which the *Church* certainly meant them in at their first Appointment.

AT that Time, that is, when the *Reformation* commenced, the Notions of Religion were very corrupt, insomuch that men thought they sufficiently honoured God, and consulted the Salvation of their own Souls, if they did but barely partake in the Externals of Religion, though they were guilty at the same time, and even upon the most solemn days, of the most flagrant and crying Vices *, For this cause, I question not, Our Church

* See *Sparrow's Collection*, &c. p. 9.

thought

thought it necessary to insert some such Expressions (and considering the prevailing Notions of That time, they could hardly be too strong) into Her Exhortations to This Sacrament, as might infuse Thoughts into the Minds of her Members of a proper Preparation for so solemn an Institution; and, that they might not think Nothing more was necessary for Acceptance with GOD, than barely presenting themselves at the Holy Table, She called upon them to consider *the Greatness of the Thing*, or, in the present Ecclesiastic Style, *the Dignity of that Holy Mystery*, and also, *to search and examine their own Consciences, and that not lightly, nor after the manner of Dissemblers with GOD*, but so, *as to come in the Marriage-Garment required by GOD in holy Scripture*; for without That, the receiving the Holy Communion would be so far from being a Means to them of Eternal Life, that *the Devil would more powerfully enter into them, and bring them to Destruction both of Body and Soul*. All which Expressions, shocking and terrible as they are, are certainly founded upon Religious Truth; for no doubt, every Abuse of GOD's Ordinances renders a Man more bold and daring in Sin, and consequently his State much worse than it was before: But they were not designed to deter men from the Sacrament, but to awaken their Minds, to make them consider duly what they are going about, and what solemn

solemn Engagements they ought to take upon themselves, when they purpose to offer themselves as Communicants; that *discerning the Lord's Body*, or making a proper Distinction between the Lord's Supper and a common Meal, they may not come like the *Corinthians*, loosely and carelessly, as to a Merry-meeting; but *religiously and godly disposed*, with a devout Frame of Mind, and a Seriousness of Behaviour, becoming such an holy and venerable Occasion.

THIS is so grave an *Exhortation*, and seems to carry with it (especially as it stands *now* improved) so much of Reason, and also so much of Propriety and Fitness to the End and Design of the Holy Communion, that I shall make it the Plan of my present Discourse; that I may lay before you the Judgment of the Church, as touching That *Worthiness* which She has thought necessary for coming to the Lord's Supper: And which certainly We, her Members, ought rather to be determined by, than by That of any private Persons; who too generally from an Heat of Zeal, or a Warmth of Imagination, are more apt to lead Men into Error and Superstition, than to a Knowledge of Piety and Truth.

My Method shall be, To explain in a very easy, concise and familiar way, the several
Parts

Parts and Branches of it; and then, to press you briefly, from the Reasons therein given, to general and constant Communion at the Lord's Table.

I. To begin with the Explication.

1. THE *first* Thing the Church exhorts us to do previous to this Occasion, is, " To render most humble and hearty Thanks to
" Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for
" that he hath given his Son, our Saviour
" *Jesus Christ*, not only *to die for us*, but
" also to be *our Spiritual Food and Sustenance*
" in this Holy Sacrament."

THIS thankful Mind is necessary to prepare us for worthy Receiving, because we must first have a deep Sense of our Misery by Sin, and of the Necessity of Redemption from it by the Blood of the Holy *Jesus*, afore we can expect to be better'd, or to obtain any Benefit, by what he has done and suffered for us. It would be Absurd, to think, that God will in any wise bless us, or continue his Blessings to us, if we ungratefully slight or undervalue his Loving-kindness and Mercy. He expects that upon all accounts, we be Sensible and Thankful; so that a due Sense of his Favors, and Gratitude for them, *may dispose* our Hearts and Minds to serve, honour and obey Him, with greater Diligence and Care, throughout

throughout the remaining part of our Lives. For, all the Good he does us, is not for his Own Sake, but Ours; that thereby winning Us to his Love and Obedience, He may in the End make us Happy for ever, according to the Reason and Fitness of things; which requires, that every Good man shall be Happy, and every Bad man Miserable.

WHETHER GOD could absolutely and unconditionally have pardoned Mankind, without any *mediating* Consideration whatsoever, seems to be out of the present Question: 'Tis hard putting Limits to *infinite* Power, Wisdom and Mercy. But this we are sure of, To make us the more sensible of his Compassion towards us, and to draw us the more effectually to Repentance and Newness of Life; *He so loved the World, that he gave his Only-begotten Son, that as many as believe in him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life.* The Death therefore of *Jesus Christ* is the Consideration, on which alone GOD will receive the returning Prodigal, (not to an adequate Reward, for That every Virtue has a Natural Claim to, but) to the Endless Joys of a future State; and accordingly this Condescension of his Mercy, on which Account only we can be for ever *perfectly* Happy, is here made the Chief thing, that calls out loudly for our Thanks and Praise.

THE other here mentioned is, His being *our Spiritual Food and Sustenance* in This Holy Sacrament, that is, that which strengthens and supports our Souls in a Life of Godliness and Virtue. But the great Debate is, How does *Christ* support them? How does he give them, in This, spiritual Strength and Vigor? Does he do it, by communicating himself to us *actually* and *personally*, or by a Participation of his *very* Body and Blood, or in any other *absolute* and *irresistible* manner? No: This is not the Doctrine of the Church. For, tho' She tells us, "We obtain Remission of Sins, "by His *meritorious Cross and Passion*;" yet She avers and teaches, "We receive the Bread "and Wine but *in Remembrance of it*:" And consequently She must mean, He is *the Food* of our Souls, or sustains them in all Piety and Goodness; not by any Pardon conveyed unto them, or any forcible Impression made upon them; but, by This *Remembrance* working rationally on their Hearts and Minds. This it is that nourishes, supports and strengthens them, as it is a Motive greatly fitted to stir up in us all Christian Graces; not only our Thankfulness for *Christ's* Death, but a lively Faith in his Merits; with holy Resolutions of Obedience to so kind and good a Master, and also a true Love to our Brethren, who are all Co-partners with Us, and Heirs as well as We, of this extraordinary Grace of God.

THE immediate, that is, the proper and principal End of this *Sacred Rite* is therefore, not, as the sanguine Hopes of some men seem to imagine, to confer upon us Eternal Life, to which we can arrive but gradually, or by several intermediate Steps; but (as has been said) to bring to our Remembrance in the most powerful and persuasive manner, by the Exhibition of the Holy Symbols, the Death and Sufferings of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. So He himself in the Institution: *Do this in Remembrance of Me*. And so also in St. Paul's Words: *This do Ye, as often as Ye eat and drink it, in Remembrance of Me*. And so the Church: "In Remembrance that *Christ* died for thee."

BUT the End of this *Remembrance*, which (give me leave to say) is quite another Consideration, and which is intended to carry us a Step farther in the Way of Life, is to excite us to the constant and uniform Practice of all Godliness and Virtue; because none can have any Share in the Benefits of *Christ's* Death, but the sincerely good and righteous.

AND again, the End of that Sincerity of *Holy Obedience*, begotten in us by the Commemorative Faith of what our Lord has done and suffered for us, and which God has made the Condition of his Mercy through *Jesus Christ*, is to obtain for us the Divine Favor
and

and Acceptance; it being not obtainable, but by our own pious and hearty Endeavours.

AND finally, it is by This *Acceptance thro' Christ* only, that, after a Life well-spent in Sincerity and Truth, we shall come to be possessed of Everlasting Happiness; according to that of our Saviour: *Well done, Good and faithful Servant! enter Thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

At most therefore the Lord's Supper is but a Means of Grace, that is, of Virtue and Goodness, which in this Sense are the Gift of God, as being work'd in us thro' his Spirit by the holy Ordinances, which He has appointed for that End. But yet as a Means only, or an Extraordinary Help, of a virtuous, holy and religious Life, without which we never can be Happy; this Sacrament as the Food of our Souls, very highly deserves to raise up within us all the humble Offices of a grateful Mind.

2. THE next thing after this Thankfulness of Heart, which the Church exhorts you to consider is, "The Dignity, that is, the Solemnity, and Awfulness, of this Holy Mystery," (at first called a *Mystery*, or a Thing *bidden* and *concealed*; because it was concealed from the New Converts, till they were instructed for partaking of it, in a due and

proper manner) “ that you may approach it
 “ *in the Marriage-Garment* required by God.
 “ in Holy Scripture.”

THIS Marriage-Garment is a pure and pious Disposition, with which the Soul is, as it were, clothed and invested; for which cause Warning is given of the Celebration of This Sacrament, or of its Administration, *to all such only as shall be religiously and devoutly disposed.* And the Method the Church prescribes whereby to acquire this Disposition, is,
 “ By examining your Lives and Conversa-
 “ tions by the Rule of God’s Command-
 “ ments; and whereinsoever you shall per-
 “ ceive yourselves to have offended either by
 “ Will, Word or Deed, there to bewail your
 “ own Sinfulness, and to confess yourselves
 “ to Almighty God, *with full purpose of*
 “ *Amendment of Life.*”

HERE it will be easily observed by every intelligent and considering person, That you are not required to examine yourselves, as to the State of your Souls, nor to think you are *worthily* qualified; by the great Number of Prayers and Meditations you have previously used, by the many pious Books you have frequently read, the Sacraments you have heretofore partaken of, the Zeal you may have shewn on any pious or charitable Occasion, or for the Interest of the Church, or the due
 Observance

Observance of its Ceremonies ; (tho' These, and such like, things may have their Times, and Uses) - but only, by the Rules of *pure Morality* : For, Moral Goodness, and That only, as the End of all other Appointments and Ordinances as well as this, *is before God and the Father*, or, according to the Law of Nature and Revelation, *Pure and Undeiled Religion*.

So just, so pure and uncorrupt a Teacher of Truth has the Church in this point shewn herself, that She admits of no Commutation, no more than the Gospel itself does, for Moral Purity ; and therefore, She ties your Examination down to GOD's Commandments, as the only sure and infallible Rule of judging what the State of your Souls is: *Viz.* Whether you have, and do, truly believe in GOD ; have preferred nothing in this World before him ; never spoken slightly, profanely, or dishonourably of him ; and neither contemptuously neglected his most solemn Worship, nor polluted it with an unprepared or unholy Mind : Whether you have done in all things, as you would be done unto ; honoured your Superiours ; done Violence to no Man ; not defiled, nor endeavoured to defile, the Purity of any ; wrong'd no one in his Property ; spoken to no one's Prejudice ; nor had any Desires or Covetings so to do, in any of these Particulars ? He that can answer these Questions to himself, with a pure Conscience, or
with

with steady Resolutions of Amendment, is so far a worthy and an happy person.

3. BUT *thirdly*, if you find you have been deficient in these Moral Duties, or any of them, and, " That your Offences have been
 " not only against God, but also against your
 " Neighbours; then, besides confessing your
 " Sins to God, (who alone *can pardon*, who
 " alone *can save*) and begging Mercy at his hands
 " with full purposes of Reformation; the
 " Church exhorts the Person offending, to seek
 " and cultivate a Reconciliation by all the proper means he can, and also *to be ready* to
 " make Restitution and Satisfaction according
 " to the uttermost of his power, for all such
 " Wrongs and Injuries done to any other," in their Persons, Good-name, or Interests; whether by the ways of Malice, Envy, Revenge, Lust, Avarice, Oppression, or any such like.

PERHAPS of all the antecedent Duties to this Holy Sacrament, there is no one more neglected than this. Some are too proud to acknowledge a Fault, or are ashamed to do it: Some too covetous to make Restitution, or for other Reasons unwilling to do what is so apparently just and equal. But yet 'tis certain, without such Satisfaction as this, the Grand Rule of Equity, *Of doing as we would be done by*, is as much transgressed as ever;
 and

and that also without it, there can be no true Repentance, no holy and firm Resolutions of ever being, or doing, better. And consequently under such Circumstances, the Lord's Supper cannot but be Ineffectual to the Good of such mens Souls, who are indisposed to do their Duty; and they likewise themselves must be utterly Unworthy for it, and Unacceptable to GOD, whilst they continue thus Injurious and Unjust to Men. 'Tis in this, as in the Duty of Prayer: *GOD beareth not Sinners; but if a Man be a Worshipper of GOD, and doeth His Will, him He beareth.*

IN some Cases indeed Restitution cannot possibly be made; perhaps, for Want of Ability: But still we are exhorted *to be ready* to make it, if we can; and if we cannot, there is enough in GOD's Word to assure us, that He will then *accept* That Willingness of Mind. But yet Reason tells us, only on This Condition, That if it ever happens, that the Person becomes able, the Duty shall be then discharged; for otherwise it will appear plain, He was no better than an Hypocrite and a Deceiver.

OR perhaps, Sins may be of such a Nature, that they will admit of no proportionable Restitution, nor will any Satisfaction be really sufficient; as in the Case of Murder, Adultery, and such like, most heinous Offences.

Now

Now as it will not be safe, nor proper, to acknowledge such Offences spontaneously, or of ones own accord, to men ; and as also, no sufficient Restitution can be made ; the Crime will call out naturally, and necessarily, for the most mortifying Humiliation, and the greatest Sorrow and Contrition of Spirit. Of this, one of the Kings of *Israel* has given us such a commendable Example in his Penitential *Psalms*, on account of his Guilt towards *Uriah* and *his* Wife, as is highly deserving the Imitation of every *alike-guilty* person ; and I wish, all such may, on the same Conduct, equally meet with the same Acceptance.

4. BUT besides this, as Injuries and Offences are constantly acting and re-acting among men, the Church in the *fourth* place calls upon us, “ To be ready to *forgive others* “ who have offended Us, as We would “ have Forgiveness of our Offences at God’s “ hand.”

THIS Duty of forgiving Others, when we draw near the Lord’s Table, is certainly very urgent, and indispensibly necessary ; because, according to the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, We are unfit to approach God, even in our *daily* Prayers, without it. And yet I doubt, this Necessity of its being discharged then, though it is a constant and a daily Duty, is a Consideration

sideration that hinders many from coming there at all, when they are warned to do it. Some or other of their Neighbours have done them an Injury or Displeasure, and they find themselves unable to forgive them; not from any Inveteracy or Bitterness in their own Breasts, but because the offending persons seem to continue in the same provoking, malicious, or mischievous Mind against them, neither acknowledging their Fault, nor at all regarding it: Otherwise, they should be glad to come to a Reconciliation, and forgive them heartily.

'Tis true, the Condescension, or Endeavour, towards a Renewal of Amity and Goodwill, should always, in Reason and Religion, begin at the offending Party. But if it does not; this is no just Reason, nor so much as a plausible Pretence, why any Man so offended, should on that account abstain from the Holy Communion. The Words of Our Church are not, That you *shall forgive*, but only, That you *be ready to forgive*, others; that is, if they come and acknowledg their Fault: For certainly, 'tis against Reason and the Nature of things, to forgive a Man that will not. Nay, I must confirm this Truth, by saying, 'Tis also against Holy Writ, and the Example of God himself reveal'd unto us, as a Pattern of our Practice.

IF thy Brother, saith our Lord, sin against thee seven times a day, and seven times a day come unto thee, and say, I repent, thou shalt forgive him. Which plainly on the other hand implies, that if a Man refuse to come and confess his Fault, no Christian is obliged to forgive him; tho' Every Christian in such case is to be in Readiness or Disposition to forgive him, on his Acknowledgment and Repentance.

'Tis the same, with regard to the Example of GOD; from which we may collect, that tho' we are *to love our Enemies*, or be ready upon all occasions *to do them Good*, (for this GOD does *to the Unthankful, and to the Evil*) yet no such hard Thing is required from us, as to forgive an Enemy whilst he continues such. *Be ye merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful*: That is, with a Similitude of Mercy. We are therefore bound to copy out this Moral Attribute of GOD, (for indeed the Divine Moral Properties are the Foundation, and Reason, of all Morality in his Rational creatures) in our Conduct towards such as injure and offend us: But then you know, GOD is only Merciful and Forgiving to the returning Penitent; and not that, even in *Jesus Christ*, but on a thorough Renewal of Life, and, on begging Pardon of him in the most humble and submissive, as well as the most earnest and importunate manner. As
We

We then are only required to be Merciful, *as He is merciful*; we are certainly in no wise obliged to forgive obstinate Offenders against Us, nor to receive them to Friendship, or Reconciliation, (tho' we ought to treat them with Offices of Charity to bring them to a better Mind) but as they reform their Manners, humble themselves, acknowledg their Faults, and ask Pardon for them. No man ever wisely or discreetly forgives an offending Child, or an offending Servant, but on That condition; nor is he obliged actually to forgive others, without it. If he be disposed to Forgiveness, the Fault is not on *his* part, but on *theirs* who have offended, and make no Advances towards reconciling themselves to their injured Brethren, in a proper and a christian manner, as they ought.

5. 'Tis now observable in the *last* place, That upon such Qualifications as these, the Church encourages the most profligate of Christians to come to the Lord's Supper; even "Blasphemers of GOD, the Slanderers
" of his Word, Adulterers, the Envious and
" Malicious, and if there be yet any other
" more grievous Sinner."

THIS above all things shews, what kind of Preparation that is, which is sufficient to make men *Worthy Partakers* at the Holy Table; and the Church's Order for giving No-

tice of the Celebration more than intimates, what Time She judges necessary for completing this Religious Work. The *Sunday* before the Celebration is the longest Time She has fix'd for giving Warning of it, and This Year it happens to be but *the Day* before; and consequently, Her Judgment is, that so short a Preparation will be sufficient, even for the greatest Sinners, to render them fit to partake in this Sacred Rite, so as to answer the Ends of Religion, and the Acceptance of GOD *.

IF it should be said, These are *Stated Times*, and every-body is in expectation of the Sacrament before the Warning given: I answer, That is not the Case. The Church, by giving Warning, supposes, that Some at least have *not consider'd* it: And calling out to the greatest Sinners to prepare themselves, She supposes, that as yet they are *not prepar-ed*: And allowing such to come, if they do repent, She supposes further, that sufficient Time has been given them *to repent* in, for this Holy purpose. But let me ask: What Repentance such men are capable of, in so

* The Parson, Vicar, or Curate, the next *Sunday* or *Holiday*, or at least *one Day* before he shall minister the Communion, shall give Warning to the Parishioners, or those which be present, that *they may prepare themselves* thereto.

K. Edward VI's Order of Communion.

short

short a Space of Time, as a Week only, or may be one Single Day?

'TIS certain beyond all dispute, That as there are different Degrees of Righteousness, so there are, and cannot but be, different Degrees of Worthiness, among Christians. The most Righteous are in the sight of God, the most Worthy. These Degrees may be reduced to Three special Ones; but which of them is the Worthiness *for the Lord's Supper*, must according to the present Argument be determined, not by the Opinions of private Men, but by the decisive Doctrine of the Church only.

THE highest, and most desirable, of all is, A constant, uniform and well-establish'd Life of Virtue. To acquire this should be every Man's Endeavour, as it is the Design and End of all True Religion.

THE next is, A thorough Review of a Man's past Life, and a particular Humiliation for, and true Forsaking of, every great and presumptuous Sin. No Christian can be Eternally safe, without This.

AND the lowest I take to be, An humble devout Mind, suddenly accompanied with fixt Resolutions, or (as the *Exhortation* itself speaks) *with full purposes*, of Amendment of Life.

Life. This indeed is unfinished, and consequently the *least perfect* of them all; but yet it ought to be encouraged, as the Beginning of Virtue.

Now this, as it is best fitted to take in the greatest Number of Christians, is what the Moderation and Wisdom of the Church has pitched upon, on this sudden Occasion, for *Sacramental Worthiness*; reckoning all Those sufficiently prepared, who come to the Lord's Table with such *religious* and *devout* Dispositions. And this She has done, as well knowing, 'Tis a Business of great Time to examine Every Act of a Man's Life, and to humble himself greatly for his Sins by a Course of Fasting and Prayer; and, that Habits of Virtue are by no means so easily acquired as this. There is not a Man among us, but who finds many Years scarce enough to subdue *one* beloved reigning Vice, and to give him a thoroughly confirm'd Habit of the contrary Practice; and 'tis therefore in vain to expect This should be done, in a Week or a few days. 'Tis well, if by the frequent Helps of Reading, Meditation, Prayer, and the Sacraments, he be at last able to effect it, with great Pains and much Struggling. The Moral Qualification therefore, which is *absolutely necessary* for the Lord's Supper, or *without which*, I mean, a Man ought *not to partake* of it, is not an Habit of all Virtue, nor yet

yet a previous Change of Life from Sin to Righteousness, (though most Happy is it for Those, that can come *thus prepared*) but it is a Resolution of *That Change* of Life, and of persevering for the future in all Virtue and Godliness, through Faith in *Christ*, and by the Grace of the Holy Spirit *. He that comes in this manner is, as the Church teaches, a *Worthy Communicant*, let the Time of his Preparation have been ever so short; and We are, by Her Direction, to declare ourselves ready to *administer it to all such, as shall be So disposed*.

ALAS, the best of us all are poor sinful Creatures, (for *He that says he has no Sin, deceives himself, and the Truth is not in him*) and therefore come to the Lord's Table, at most, Not with *all* Moral Virtues; or at least, Not without *some* Habits of Sin, of one sort or other: And for this indisputable Reason it is, that a truly pious Disposition, believing, fearing, and loving God, *with full purpose* of

* The Priest shall say to them which *be ready to take* the Sacrament, "If any man *here* be an open Blaphemer, Adulterer, &c. and be not *earnestly minded to leave* the same Vices,—let him not come to this Holy Table." See K. Edw. VI's Order, &c. And the present *Communion Office*. "You that *intend to lead* a new Life, following the Commandments of God, and walking *from henceforth* in his holy ways, Draw near *with Faith*, and take this holy Sacrament *to your Comfort*."

leaving

leaving our Sins, and growing Good to the utmost of our power, is All we can, under the different Degrees of Preparation, properly pretend to. So that the best Man's *Worthiness* for the Sacrament, is strictly nothing but *This Disposition*. No man is yet so Good as he ought to be: And all that Any man can do, is but to resolve with a pious humble Mind to grow better, and to live hereafter, as much as possible according to the Grace of God.

Now suppose, a very profligate Person, or one I mean that has been (in the Language of the Church) a *very grievous Sinner*, who has as yet but *few* Virtues and *many* Vices, should notwithstanding come with the like pious Thoughts and holy Resolutions, of changing his Course of Life from this time forward, though This Purpose has but lately, *very lately*, entered his Heart and Mind; would he not be *truly Worthy*, tho' far from being *equally Righteous*, with other men? And no less accepted as a *prepared* Communicant, tho' *not yet fit* for the Kingdom of Heaven? Surely! He may be *Thankful* for the Death of *Christ*, and for the Institution and Usefulness of This Sacrament: He may be *Sensible* in what he has transgress'd the Commandments of God, and confess his Guilt to him: He may be *ready* to make Restitution, and *ready* to forgive in so short a Space: And this
is

is all the Qualification, the Church requires. For according to Her Doctrine, he comes not *to have Salvation conferr'd* upon him, by the merit of this single religious Act; but in order *to grow Good*, by the most serious and awful Remembrance of our Lord's Death and Passion; and, to regain by his future better Conduct the Divine Acceptance, and in the end Everlasting Life, thro' the Meditation of his blessed Saviour.

NOR let it be thought, that This *sudden Disposition as a proper Worthiness* for Him, is any Encouragement to Vice, but just the contrary: For a Wicked man is not exhorted to come, if he resolves *to retain his Sins* with a perverse, unholy Mind; but to come *religiously and devoutly disposed*, with holy Resolutions of *forsaking them* for ever. And in this the Church copies out the Example of our Lord himself, who never rejected the least Appearances of Virtue and Goodness; and professes, he came *not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*.

II. THE Application of this, needs to be but very short.

LET me then (as I at first propos'd) in Imitation of, and in Duty to, the Church of *England*, (whose Conduct on This Head is the most reasonable of all Churches, and is
E indeed

indeed no other than the very Gospel of *Jesus Christ*) exhort, invite, and beseech you All to come to the Holy Communion; which was instituted by Our Lord for the spiritual Improvement of *All Christians*, and in the first Ages of the Church was used by *All*, however grievously laden they might be with the Weight and Burden of their Sins.

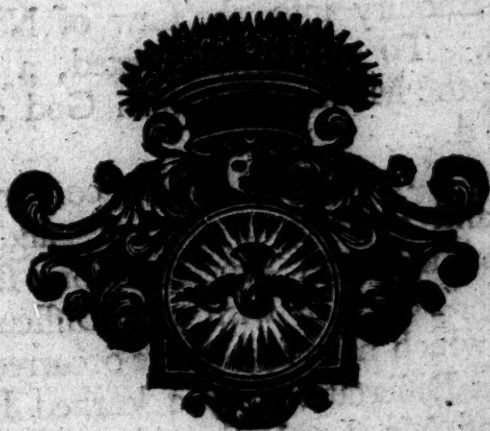
THINK not, that except you have all the Purity and Perfection you wish for, you are therefore *Unworthy*, and *shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*: For no Man is Thus perfect. All are Sinners: And any one that comes with a *truly* Commemorative Faith in the Death of *Jesus Christ*, as his Saviour and Redeemer, answers the End of the Institution, and cannot possibly partake *unworthily*.

I SAY, with a *truly* Commemorative Faith; which is always attended, with *suitable* Dispositions.

TAKE heed therefore that your Faith be Efficacious: Come, *religiously and devoutly disposed, with full purpose of Amendment of Life*; and you'll be, not only Worthy Partakers, but be kindly received by your Lord and Master; who himself calls out to Every penitent and returning Sinner, *Come to me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will*

will refresh you. He will then by his Holy Spirit enliven your Souls in Piety and Virtue, and by your own future honest Endeavours (which I pray God may never be wanting) at last bring you to the blessed State of Eternal Life.

F I N I S.



BOOKS printed for JOHN NOON, at the
White-Hart near Mercer's-Chapel, Cheapside.

I. **T**HE plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, vindicated from the Misrepresentations and false Reasonings of *Richard Warren*, D. D. and particularly from his abusive Charge of Socinianism; in Remarks on the three Parts of his Answer to that Book, and also on his Appendix. price 2s. 6d.

II. The Morality of Religion and the Doctrine of the Sacrament put in a true Light. price 1s.

III. The Doctrine of Hell-Torments distinctly and impartially discuss'd. price 1s.

IV. The Sacramental Worthiness: or, the Church of England's Doctrine relating to that Worthiness, which she holds necessary to an Effectual Partaking of the Lord's-Supper, explained in a Sermon preach'd on Sunday, December 24, 1738. price 6d.

These four by ABR. OAKES, L. L. D. Rector of *Wethersfield* in *Suffolk*.

V. An Enquiry into the Law of Nature and Revelation. To which is annexed, a Discourse concerning the Mediator between God and Man. price 1s. 6d.

VI. The Argument à priori concerning the Existence and Perfections of God, and its Importance to Virtue and True Religion, stated and consider'd. Together with the Difficulties and Objections which have any where occurred; particularly in a Dissertation, by a learned Hand, at the End of Mr. *Law's* Treatise of Space, &c. price 1s.

VII. A Discourse concerning Virtue and Religion: Occasioned by some late Writings. price 6d. The two last writ by one Author.